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THE MARKED WINE.

My acquaintance with the world of rank and fashion was never very extensive, but some years ago, I did happen to know a lady in Belgravia who wanted a maid, as also a young woman in Paddington whom I could recommend, with a safe conscience, as qualified to fill the vacancy. The lady was matron and mistress of a coroneted house, which I will designate by their initial, and call them the L—— family. The young woman was the daughter of an honest, industrious man, who in his day had served as butler in more than one titled family, but had given up the pantry and sideboard, and betaken himself to a small confectioner's shop. The goods in it were mostly of home manufacture, and of a better quality than is usually found in such establishments. I believe it was through them that myself and Johnson, as I will call the ex-butler, for my story does not admit of giving real names, first became acquainted; at any rate, acquainted we were sufficiently for me to recommend his daughter, the eldest of six children, who had been out at service, and lost her situation only through the death of her mistress, to Lady L—— as a proper and reliable maid. The girl had been wanting a situation for some time; fortune, and not character, had gone against her. With himself, his wife, and five juniors depending on the small confectioner's shop, it was important to Johnson that a place should be found for his eldest daughter, and I thought myself the bearer of glad tidings when I stepped into his shop with the intelligence that Lady L—— would take her for a month on trial.

It was a November evening, heavy and dull, with not exactly a fog, but a gray leaden sky, from which daylight was sliding away into a still heavier night: the gas was glimmering along the little street where Johnson lived, in the oldest part of Paddington; but everybody kept within doors. I found his shop utterly deserted, and the old man sitting behind his counter in a desponding attitude, with his gray head leaning on his hand. 'There is very little friendly inquiries regarding the state of trade, made by buying; very little indeed,' he said in answer to my way of prologue to the good news. 'You see people are saving themselves now for Christmas, and the children have all gone back to school; it's the dullest time in the whole year, and like to last for some weeks.' I cut short the sigh with which Johnson

closed his account of business by saying: 'Well, I have got a place for Lizzie. Lady L—— in Belgrave Square wants a maid, and will take her for a month on trial.' I had expected to see Johnson in a flush of delight, if not of gratitude, but the old man looked as blank as if I had announced Lizzie's immediate transportation to Botany Bay, and he said in a low, terrified tone: 'Thank you, ma'am, thank you: it's too good you are to take such trouble for us; but not that house—I could not let Lizzie go there.'

'Why, Johnson,' said I, laying down the bun with which I had been refreshing myself, in perfect amazement, 'it is one of the first houses in the West End. Besides being titled themselves, the L—— family are connected with half the court: they are known to be liberal and kind to their servants; and if I am not mistaken, you once served in that house yourself.'

'I did, ma'am,' said Johnson: 'I was butler there thirty years ago, in the old family's time—the elder branch, I think, they ought to be called. They died quite out with the last heir, my master's only son. That was how the estate and title came to the present family.'

'And why do you not wish Lizzie to go into their service?'

'Well, ma'am'—and Johnson stepped round, and shut his own shop-door—'it's a story I wouldn't tell to everybody: it don't do for people in our station to make such things public; and I don't care for telling it at all; only the like lies heavy on one's mind, and you have taken so much trouble about Lizzie, I'll just tell you my reason for not liking to see her in that house; and you'll be kind enough, ma'am, I am sure you will, to put Lady L—— off quietly with any discreet excuse you think best, about the girl falling sick, or the like. Her ladyship will get another maid soon enough, and maybe Providence will send my girl another situation. I know you'll never repeat what passes here between you and me, to the injury of a poor family, and the annoyance of a great one; that is all that talking about it could serve for; but I know you won't, ma'am, and I'll tell you the story. I always think of it when I happen to be alone here, and no customers coming, as there are this evening.'

I made the requisite protestations of silence and secrecy, for my woman's curiosity was roused, and however extraordinary it may seem, I have kept the said promises till now, when Johnson's family are gone

to Australia, and himself to the other world. At the time, he was satisfied that I would keep them—there was a mutual alliance between the honest man and me; and after another look round the shop, and a declaration that they were all at tea inside, he spread his hands on the counter—which was Johnson's notion of solemnity—and proceeded with his tale, which I believe to be substantially true.

I was butler in the L—— family for nearly three years; I served them in town and country, and was more than once left in charge of the house. I had come with good recommendations from my last service in Lord Bristol's. I left them with the best of characters; but that was the last situation I ever had, or wanted. As you say of the present family, the L——s were liberal and considerate to their servants. They kept a large establishment, and everything on a grand, handsome scale, befitting a nobleman's house; but we down-stairs people made it out, it would be long business to tell you how, that Lord L—— had as little to spare as any man in Belgravia. His father had raced and gamed with the wicked Lord Lyttelton; he had done likewise with Charles James Fox, and the rest of that set, in his youth, before he turned Tory: so there were mortgages on the estate; heavily encumbered they said it was, but would get clear perhaps in Master Vincent's time. He was the only son or child Lord and Lady L—— ever had; the Honourable Mr L—— was his proper title now, for he was turned twenty-two, and going on his father's early courses, which, however, had been all over before he was born. At Newmarket, Epsom, and Ascot, he was the man for betting on horses and getting fleeced by blacklegs and jockeys. In gaming-houses and worse places, he was the boy for not going home till the morning; yet everybody liked Mr Vincent, and wished him well. He was handsome, gay, and good-natured, as civil to the dustman as to my lord, ready to help every man, woman, or child who had got into trouble or distress, and never willing to let a servant sit up for him without paying him well. His father and mother saw no faults in him; he was their only son and heir, and they were too much occupied with business of their own to take notice of his ongoinga. Lord L—— was entirely given up to politics of the Tory kind. I am not sure whether he thought he was saving the country, or that the ministry could not do without him, but morning, noon, and night, he was buzzing about the Conservative Club, getting letters and answering them, going to dinners and making speeches, receiving deputations in the library, talking with whippers-in, getting petitions signed, and when parliament was sitting, very nearly living in the House of Lords. Of course, his lady went on a different tack. She was what they call a leader of fashion, having no daughters to bring out and get married. Lady L—— brought out herself; and whether it was admirers she wanted, or a richer husband, after his lordship's death, none of her maids could be certain, but the West-end milliners, jewellers, and hairdressers were for ever sending in parcels and bills, and nobody saw her ladyship in the same dress for two evenings together. She minded nothing else, to my knowledge, and the butler gets a pretty good understanding of all that goes on in the four corners of a house. The morning was spent in trying on, the afternoon in getting dressed, and in the evening Lady L—— received or went out to company. She was twenty years younger than her husband; but he was some way above sixty; and leading fashion must be hard work, for there wasn't a bit on her ladyship's bones, nor a dark hair in her head, if she had not shaved it all off, and worn a wig. But for constant enamelling, rouge, and pearl-powder, she would have been no beauty. In spite of the paint, the padding, and the everlasting parcels, she was not much of one; but

these gentry never get things cleared up to them like common folks. Lord L—— went on from one year to another far busier than a bee with what he called his public life, and the wits at the club called him Lord Preamble and Old Red Tip. Lady L—— kept the milliners and herself up to it night and day; she said the world expected everything from a reigning belle; and her fashionable friends used to remark what efforts she made to forget her age and keep up her appearance.

They were both, as I have said, too much occupied with their own affairs to take notice of the rigs Mr Vincent was running; but at last we all thought his mother had got a notion of them. Of the two, she was the fonder of her son. Whatever Lord L—— might have been in his youth, when they said he was so wild and gay, I suppose living in the House of Lords, and receiving deputations, had in a manner stupefied him; for one might have carried off the dining-room and his lordship in it, if that had been possible, without his knowing anything about it, while he sat with his eyes half closed, drowsing away concerning the difficulties of the cabinet, and the coalitions that ought to be formed. I have learned those grand words with hearing them so often at the sideboard. But Lady L—— was of a quicker turn, and besides her business was a far more expensive one than his lordship's. In saving the country and keeping in the ministry, he spent nothing but his time, for which he had no other use, but her eternal parcels brought bills after them. The family had just enough to do in keeping up their style; the bills had not been paid for years, dunning-letters and messages were coming every day, and her ladyship generally went into hysterics once a quarter when they were particularly pressing. In short, Lady L——'s debts were something past the common, and so were her son's. There was no use in letting his lordship know; beside his mortgaged estate and his great occupation, he had an uncommonly stiff temper of the cold hard kind, and humdrum as he was, his livelier lady and son both stood in dread of him.

Such was the state of things when I came into their service. The valets and the lady's-maid lived in the daily expectation of setting out with them to the continent, seeing the town-house closed, and the establishment broken up; but Lady L—— was a woman of wonderful management. There was at that time—you see it is thirty years ago—man—I ought to say a gentleman, perhaps—living in C—— Square, whom they called Mr Vanderholt. Some said he was a Jew, some said he was a Dutchman, but everybody agreed that there was not a richer man in the West End.

Mr Vanderholt was publicly a banker and a member of parliament; privately known to be the head of a solicitor firm, who carried on business and sharp practice, it was said, in Craven Street, Strand; believed to be the moneyed and money-making man of several speculating companies; and supposed to be a money-lender in the quietest way, with exorbitant interest and sound security. On which of these accounts, or if it were for them all together, I cannot tell, but from fellow-butlers and footmen in the best houses, I learned that Mr Vanderholt was to be seen at their finest balls and tip-top dinners. He was a stout bald-headed man, somewhere about fifty-five, with a dark complexion, a hard steady face, and a harder manner of speaking. At the best table and among the finest company, he would have said anything in the way of taking people down, or telling his mind with a kind of a dry sneer. He wore no fashionable things, scarcely dressed well, was not particular in the use of soap and water; but a greater judge of good dinners and good wine there was not in all London. The most confident cooks stood in mortal fear of him; and ladies who at all affected housekeeping had no rest in their minds for a week before he came to dinner. It was my

belief, the gentry, every one, hated him, yet he dined and drank wine, and made his dry remarks among them. The ladies disliked him particularly. He had never married, and never would, it was thought. His house in C— Square was kept by a foreign housekeeper with a few servants, for he saw a little company at home. Lady L— disliked him most of all: they said it was for some observations about paint and finery never concealing age; but I know that her ladyship never called Mr Vanderholt anything in my first season of service but 'that shocking old bore.' You may judge, then, that there was a good deal of talk and speculation among us downstairs the week before the Derby-day, when a select dinner party was given at L— House, and Mr Vanderholt was one of the company. I had the honour of hearing him making his remarks on the dinner, the wine, and the ladies; in fact, on everything that came under his eye or taste, just as my acquaintances of other pantries and sideboards had told me. It is in my recollection how he informed Lord L— that a thousand like him could not keep the ministry in their places, if there were any chance of them going out; and warned her ladyship that French white satin did not suit people getting into years. I saw her eyes flash fire. Lady L— had a considerable temper and pride enough for Lucifer's eldest daughter, but she made-believe to smile the next minute, though it was only a grin, and paid the stout, bald-headed, disagreeable man as much attention as if he had been the Duke of Wellington.

After that, they never had *déjeuner*, dinner, or ball that Mr Vanderholt was not invited. He never made himself a whit more agreeable; yet her ladyship continued to shew him uncommon civility, and always looked disappointed and out of sorts when he did not happen to come. It was the wonder among us servants what she could see in him; and Mr Vincent appeared to be taken with the Jew or Dutchman quite as much as was his mother. We noticed that they drew together more since the duns began to come about them; but Lord L— did not share in their fancy for Mr Vanderholt. I heard him once say to her ladyship when she was issuing cards of invitation out of the back drawing-room: 'Why on earth do you invite that vulgar creature?' and she gave him a long lecture about doing as the world did, and paying proper attention to people who had become fashionable, and were seen in the first society. I know they had other arguments on the subject, for Robinson the footman heard them. Mr Vincent would not dispute with his father, but he helped Lady L— in the entertaining of her favourite, and agreed with his lordship that the old man was a terrible bore. We couldn't make it out; but at last Lady L—'s maid—she was a Frenchwoman, keen and clever as they generally are, but a very respectable young person; you see I have no prejudices, ma'am, though they did say mademoiselle refused me, which wasn't true, for I never popped the question; my own Martha, that's now Mrs Johnson, and I were keeping company; indeed, at the time, the French maid and I were good friends, and she told me one day that Mr Vincent's debts, and her ladyship's too, were all paid, but she couldn't tell what had become of the family diamonds which Lady L— used to wear so constantly, and keep with such care. Her story proved to be true. The parcels began to come without bills or messages, the ill-looking men who came inquiring for Mr Vincent were seen no more; neither were Lady L—'s diamonds; they were nearly all the jewels she had, and very valuable ones. I remember hearing Lord L— ask her at breakfast one morning why she hadn't worn them at the Duchess of Manchester's ball the evening before. Her ladyship's colour could not change, thanks to the enamelling; but there was a quivering of great fear about her face, and she mut-

tered something about diamonds not suiting her pink orafiane; and Mr Vincent took his father off the subject by telling him about somebody in parliament who was believed to be ratting.

Every one of the L— family went on his own way, as folks do in those great houses where there is room for the like. The seasons went on, too, with the goings out of town and the coming back, his lordship's politics, her ladyship's parcels, Mr Vincent's bets, and other doings known to nobody but himself and his valet. But as the seasons went and came, Mr Vanderholt went and came with them. They had him out at their seat in Devonshire for shooting; they had him back with a select company for private theatricals at Christmas; they had him at every party they gave in Belgrave Square; and we did not wonder, for it was plain how the debts had been paid, and where the money had been borrowed. One thing rather puzzled me and Robinson the footman, who, I must say, was clever at making matters out, and that was how Lady L— happened to get her diamonds to wear once a month or so, till the French maid made me clear on it, for, said she, with a knowing look: 'It's only vat you English call a loan.'

It was about the beginning of my last season in the L— service, and while things were in the state I have been telling you, that we began to notice a queer, bad-looking woman, who came inquiring for Lady L—, and was taken up the back-stairs by her maid. I knew mademoiselle did not like the look of her, and she couldn't—queer and bad is the nearest account of it I can give you, ma'am. The woman was old, and maybe she had been handsome in her young days, for it was a gipsy face, with very dark complexion, very black eyes, and very black hair, with a good deal of gray among it. She was tall and thin, had a hooked nose, a deep voice, and went mostly muffled up in a dark-red or rather ash-coloured cloak. Robinson told me he had first seen her speaking to Lady L— one day in Kensington Gardens, when she got out of the carriage, he believed in pure bad temper, because nobody in Rotten Row would pay proper attention to the new Indian shawl she had on. He said it was his belief the woman was a fortune-teller, and whatever she said to Lady L— it put her at once in good-humour. They talked for some time under the trees, and all the words he could catch were about getting out of trouble and being at the top of the tree. The queer woman had come five or six times, and had long talks with Lady L— in her dressing-room. We thought her ladyship might have had something else to think of than getting her fortune told by an old gipsy, for Mr Vanderholt had come two or three times lately, as it seemed by appointment, when Lord L— was known to be at the club, and had been closeted with her and Mr Vincent in the library. Robinson, too, going on a quiet message one day after he was gone, heard the young man wish he had not taken those post-obits, for the old knave would let it out some day, and his mother answered: 'No, Vincent; I'll take care he shan't; it was for me you did it as well as for yourself: it would be worse if Lord L— knew about the diamonds, and he says this is the last loan of them I am to have.' Robinson said he heard her groan at the end of that speech like a troubled ghost, if ever there was one; and he was sent the same evening, just before she went to dinner at Apsley House, with a note addressed to Mrs Brewer, I forget where in the Seven Dials.

The day after, Lady L— had been invited to a quadrille-party; a lace-dress had been sent home for it, but she changed her mind, and would not go, lest her strength should be too far exhausted to entertain a company of select friends who were coming to dinner next day, and Mr Vanderholt among them. People were to understand she had gone, however; her

ladyship wished to spend that evening quietly in her own rooms. Lord L—— and Mr Vincent were both out at different dinners; the French maid got leave to go and see a friend she had in one of the houses in Eaton Square; the rest of us were all downstairs doing very little; the house was dark and quiet—her ladyship did not like noise—and as the London season was wearing to its end, the whole square was quiet too. I remember it was twilight. Lady L——'s dinner was to be served in her dressing-room, and I was taking it up, when I heard a knock at the back-door, and the voice of the old woman—I would have known it among a thousand—inquiring for her ladyship. She must have been on the watch, for downstairs she came like lightning, and stopped me with: 'Don't bring up the dinner just yet, Johnson; leave your tray aside, and bring that poor woman up to me in the dressing-room; she is an unfortunate creature, who comes to tell her family trials, and I have always an interest in the afflicted.' It was the first time that ever anybody learned that of Lady L——; but I did as I was ordered—laid aside my tray, and shewed the old woman up to her dressing-room. I scarcely noticed it at the time, but it occurred to my mind afterwards, that she was carrying something very like a bottle carefully hidden under her cloak. If she were telling of family trials, they were soon disclosed, for we never knew the old woman to stay so short a time. Robinson heard her say: 'Good-night and good-fortune, your ladyship,' and she came down-stairs chinking money.

Next day, the select party were expected: they were not a large company, and no young people among them, but every one great judges of cookery and wine; so there was extra work in the kitchen, and I had to be particular in my bringings-up from the cellar and pantry. Everything was nearly ready; the family had gone to dress for dinner; Robinson was at his post in the hall; I was in the dining-room setting the sideboard, and putting some choice wine Lord L—— had bought in the cooler. It was of a kind in high fashion then among Tory gentlemen, for Whigs and Tories were still going at the time. It came from Prince Metternich's vineyard; and they called it Johannisberg. Well, I was putting it in, when a foot came behind me; and to my astonishment, there was Lady L——, looking very flurried, and still in her morning-dress. 'Johnson,' said she, 'do you see among those bottles one with a mark on the cork?'

'Yes, my lady,' said I, after looking over them, and noticing one more than the number I had brought up, with a queer mark on the cork, which I could compare to nothing but the track of a sharp claw or nail dug into it.

'Very well, Johnson'—and she spoke almost in my ear—'when the cloth is removed, and the gentlemen are going to have their wine, you will draw that bottle, and set it by Mr Vanderholt. Remember, it is for him, and no one else. He pretends to be such a judge of wine; and I wish to try—in fact, I have a wager on the subject—and you will take care that no one else gets that bottle. I will not forget it, if you help me to win my wager.'

'I'll see that no one else gets it, my lady,' said I, thinking it very natural that she should wish to take the old fellow down a trifle from his conceit about wine; and saying: 'I will depend on you, Johnson,' she ran upstairs to dress. I looked once more at the bottle, to make my eyes sure of it. The mark was a queer one; but there was nothing else, of either colour or appearance, to distinguish it from the rest of the wine; and somebody must have brought and placed it among the other bottles while I was out of the room. Her ladyship deserved credit for such a clever trick upon Vanderholt. Nobody but myself knew the secret; and I kept it, in hopes there would be a good laugh at him upstairs and down. The family got dressed; the company arrived; the cook and myself got creditably through the dinner;

there were a great many new dishes; and even Vanderholt found no fault. I never saw the banker better satisfied, nor heard him say less disagreeable things. Neither did I ever see Lady L—— pay him more attention, or look in such high spirits herself. At last, the dinner was finished, the cloth was removed, and I set on the wine, taking special care to draw the marked bottle, and place it by Mr Vanderholt. Fashions change, ma'am; and gentlemen don't drink quite so much now as they did thirty years ago. Being so long out of high-life, I am not sure if every man's bottle is set by him as it was then at Lord L——'s. He said he was a Conservative, and liked to keep up old customs, and none of the company he had that evening appeared to dissent as concerned the Johannisberg. The ladies rose and retired to the drawing-room; the gentlemen tasted their wine, and pronounced it excellent, all but Mr Vanderholt, who was talking so deeply with Mr Vincent about a wonderful race-horse—the first time I ever heard him talk of the like—that he appeared to forget his bottle. Suddenly there was a noise in the square—a newsman proclaiming the state of the poll at Lancaster; it was election-time throughout the country—the parliament had been dissolved on account of the Reform Bill, I think. Lord L—— was up into the window in a great state of excitement; all the gentlemen, even Mr Vincent, followed his example, and I also took the liberty of looking out; but Mr Vanderholt sat still at the table, and as I turned in that direction, my eye caught the movement of his hands among the nearest bottles. I did not comprehend it till they were all sat down again, filling their glasses and talking over the Lancashire poll, which was not at all to their minds. Perhaps that made the wine go down quicker; and Mr Vincent was drinking as fast as any of them, but it was out of the bottle with the marked cork. The old fellow had exchanged it for his while the rest were looking out, though he never appeared to have noticed cork or bottle. I, of course, could not interfere, could find no excuse for telling my lady, and stood in great fear of being blamed for foiling her scheme. I had resolved on taking the first opportunity to let her know, when I saw Mr Vincent lay down his glass and rise from the table, with a hurried whisper to Vanderholt, who still sat next him. The look of his face struck me as that of a man quite intoxicated, but he said as he passed me: 'Johnson, go and find my valet, if you can; send him to me in my own room, for I am not well,' and walked steadily out.

I ran to find the valet, sent him upstairs, and came back to my post, still looking for an excuse, to the drawing-room; but while the company drank on, and I stood wondering what could be the matter with Mr Vincent, a cry from his valet startled the whole house. Robinson and I were the first to rush into our young master's room, and there we found him lying on the bed, in strong but very quiet convulsions. The family doctor was sent for in all haste; but before he came, the convulsions had ceased, the face had turned perfectly blue, and Mr Vincent had gone to his account.

I need not tell you of the horror and confusion in the house; everybody agreed that Lady L—— shewed wonderful presence of mind, and made less noise than any of her guests, except Mr Vanderholt. He and they went home as quickly as they could. I understand that the fright turned some of them very pious, but I never heard that it had any effect upon him. The family doctor made a great fuss at first, wanted to keep every person in the house, and analyse the wine they had been drinking; but when Lady L—— had talked to him a few minutes in the library, he gave up both intentions, and told us that Mr Vincent's death had been caused by a sudden derangement of the vital functions. I never knew what that meant, till the newspapers, in their notice of his death, said that it was a spasm of the heart. But I knew too

late what had been intended, and what part I had been made to take in it; and when the funeral was fairly over, I took the opportunity of my lady being alone in the drawing-room to go to her quietly, and ask my discharge. 'You'll get it, Johnson, and an excellent character,' said she, pulling out her purse. 'Stop, my lady,' said I, 'what I did, was by your orders: had I known what it was, I would have put my hand in the fire rather than do it. The evil has fallen on you and yours, and for my own sake, I'll never publish it; but I'll take no money, my lady: it would burn my conscience.'

She never uttered a word, but made me a sign to leave the room; and within the same hour the house-keeper gave me my proper wages and a first-rate certificate. Neither she nor any of my fellow-servants could ever make out why I left, or was sent away; I kept the story to myself, and did not frequent their company, lest they should poke into it. But before that season ended, the establishment was broken up, and the house in Belgrave Square let to a foreign nobleman. Lord L—— had got a knowledge of his lady's debts, and his poor son's too. Of course, the man who changed the bottles lost the post-obits; goodness knows if he counted on that when making the exchange. At anyrate, he lived long after, was always rich, and in a manner courted by the West-end people; and they tell me there is a tablet in St. George's Church quite covered with his virtues. Lord and Lady L—— retired to their country-seat in Devonshire, a great old hall, and they lived in separate wings of it; but in the year after her son's death, Lady L—— had to be removed to a private asylum. I have heard that her fancy was a fear of being poisoned, and it madher half starve herself in spite of the doctors and keepers. She did not live long, and neither did Lord L——; so the title and estate passed to the present family about the time my Lizzie was born; and now you understand why I don't want her to go to service in that house. They are no relations, except by marriage, it's true; but, ma'am, I have seen Lady L—— riding in Rotten Row; she looks exactly like the last one; and Lizzie might get some such work to do as I got with the marked wine.

DIETETICS OF OLD.

In his *Gastronomic Regenerator*, the late M. Soyer lays it down as an incontrovertible axiom, that every man should—if he can get it—eat at least one dinner a day. From this we may conclude, that he who enables his fellow-man to discharge this natural obligation becomes, in an eminent way, his benefactor; and so persuaded of this truth was Harrington, that, in his *Oceana*, he broadly declares, that by whomsoever a people is fed, to him is their allegiance due—that the legitimate source of political authority is to be traced to the capacity of satisfying the appetites of a community.

The cynical criticisms which we find occasionally levelled at those enlightened men through whose genius the pleasures of the table are multiplied, and the sum of human enjoyments augmented by the increase of gustatory delights, originate in some degree from that repugnance to admit the superiority of others, in whatever way exhibited, which is the distinctive peculiarity of a certain class of minds, and in a degree, also, in that impatience which some people experience of favours received which are of a magnitude too great to be requited. When Erasmus, addressing one of them, wrote, 'You schoolmasters are princes,' he was prepared, no doubt, to concede imperial titles and honours to those illustrious professors whose laboratory is the kitchen, and without whom the schoolmaster's utility would be but small indeed. The detractors of the noble art, which contributes as well to the delectation of the human palate as to the nourishment of the human frame, are,

happily, but few, and it is a matter of congratulation that they number but few disciples in their train. Indeed, in the faculty of *relishing* his food and receiving pleasure from the process of its consumption, Jerome Cardan discovers one of the characteristic marks of humanity. 'Man alone,' says he, 'eats and drinks with gusto, and without necessity, and thence cometh certain inconveniences unto him.' But who, only to avoid such inconveniences, would sacrifice the high prerogative of extracting from the viands which prolong life and sustain vigour an exquisite enjoyment, to which beasts of a lower grade, from their inferior organisation, are necessarily strangers? The philosopher, caught in a storm at sea, pointed out to the trembling sailors a pig sleeping calmly amidst the tempest, as a fit object for their envy; but surely, though neither life-boat, nor Captain Manby's apparatus, nor patent life-belts were at hand, there was not a terrified tar present that would have willingly exchanged conditions with the snoring porker, insensible as he was to his danger. The 'inconveniences' to which Jerome advertes are neither many nor light, it is to be admitted—*crapula quam gladius* is an old saying, which imports that if the sword slay its thousands, the table-knife slays its tens of thousands, and that the kitchen furnishes weapons of destruction more deadly in their action than the arsenal or cannon-foundry. Men of acerb or sullen tempers have made the most of this fact. Any one who has seen the 'counterfeit presentment' of Dante, with its complexion of pallid hue, its lean cheeks, protruding cheek-bones, and sunken eyes, will well understand he had never found solace in the triumphs of an art in which his country had educated, and, through secondary agencies, is still educating universal Europe—for was it not to an Italian Medici transplanted into France, that we owe the inestimable treasure of the French cuisine. But Dante—though it cannot be denied he was something more than respectable as a poet, and very likely was a sort of great man in his own way—displayed his spirit of saturnine malignity and sarcasm by figuring in his *Purgatorio* the *gourmets* and *gourmands* of his time as lean and skinny apparitions; so lean and so skinny, indeed, as that, at first sight, he thought, as he tells us, they were starvelings from the siege of Jerusalem; *HOMO*, or rather *Omo*, being plainly inscribed on their visages; the sharp lines of the cheek-bones, arching eyebrows, and attenuated nose, supplying the consonant *m*, and the vowels *o, o* finding representatives in the hollow cavities of the depressed eyes. Some such punishment, probably, the Florentine censor would have applied to Miles of Crotona, whose daily allowance of meat-diet was fifty pounds in weight, according to Pliny. This choice specimen of the human carnivora is said to have devoured, at the Olympic games, a four-year-old calf at a single meal; but as he had previously carried the same calf on his shoulders, his purpose in playing Gargantua's ravenous part was probably to shew that 'huge feeding' conduced to 'huge strength,' and that whoever would be mighty in muscle, must not forget to do his devoirs as a good trencherman. Epicurus, indeed, whom the *gourmet*, ignorant of classic lore, is apt to regard as his master, accustomed himself to less stimulating fare; bread and water formed his ordinary repast; and when asked out to dinner by Jupiter, he stipulated he should be required to partake of no additional luxury except a slice of Cytheridian cheese. But it must be remembered that, unlike the Cretan, Epicurus was a philosopher, and that makes all the difference in the world, for everybody knows that much eating is unfriendly to much thinking. Lessius, a Jesuit father, writes on the subject as though he were a monk of La Trappe, for he contends that twelve ounces of solids and fourteen of fluids are a sufficiency for any one's daily support; whilst the ancient Egyptians carried their horror of excess in

diet so far as that they would not suffer the deified animal Apis even to drink of the waters of the Nile, which they supposed to have fattening qualities, lest the divine beast should become in consequence corpulent and ungenteel in his appearance. They remembered, perhaps—that is, if they ever heard of it, which is almost impossible—the aphorism of Hippocrates, that fat animals, men and beast, die early; and they had never heard of the luckless condition of Philotus the poet, whose leanness was such that it was requisite to attach lead to his shoes, or he would have been blown away with the wind.

Philoxenus the vocalist, the fact of whose existence Aristotle has preserved, appears to have been neither 'a huge feeder,' like Lancelot Gobbo and Miles of Crotona, nor an anchoress in diet, like Epicurus. He regarded eating as one of the fine arts; the process of consuming food had to him an aesthetic interest, and hence his lament that he had not a crane's throat, so that he might the longer enjoy the pleasure the process imparted to him.

Homer alludes to 'the sacred rage of hunger.' In some recorded cases, this appears to have amounted to an absolute mania, for instances have occurred of persons, the craving of whose appetite has been such as that food has scarcely abated, still less satisfied it. This grievous malady, to which the Greeks gave the appropriate name of *boulimia* (*βουλιμία*), is said by Plutarch to have afflicted Brutus in his march upon Dyrrachium; but a more recent example is that of an old woman, who lived at Great Yarmouth, somewhere about the middle of the seventeenth century. She is described as having been about 102 years old, and to have borne a son after she was fifty. In spite of her great age, she could answer ordinary questions with propriety, and her mental qualities would seem to have been unimpaired, except that she was in the habit of mistaking her eldest daughter for her mother. This antiquated dame was tormented with what was then called a dog-appetite—although we question whether our own Carlos, Cesar, or silky-eared Fan could have emulated her feats in the eating line—and to have devoured daily such an enormous mass of victuals, that, as a contemporary observer remarks, 'the overseers for the poor have of late been fain to augment her weekly allowance.'

It has been in some such morbid desire of food that the revolting practice of anthropophagy is supposed to have taken its rise; but, unhappily, well-ascertained facts do not warrant the conjecture, and the taste for human flesh must be ascribed to that sort of eccentricity of appetite which led the ancients to account the most nauseous of all drugs, asafoetida, a prime luxury, and to declare it to be food fit for the gods. Gross in their taste, however, as we may think the cannibals, they are, as it would seem, after all, epicures in their own way; for Southey tells the story of a traveller whom some of those eaters assured, in confidence, that the flesh of white men was more agreeable to the taste than that of black men, and that an Englishman afforded more relishing tit-bits than a Frenchman, who was dry, gravyless, insipid eating at best. This may appear very disgusting; but it should not be forgotten that cannibalism has been gravely vindicated on high moral grounds by Zeno, Diogenes, Chrysippus and others of the earlier Stoic school; whilst Montaigne—of course a first-rate authority in such matters—mentions an ancient people who were accustomed to devour their own parents, for the pious reason, that no father's remains could find a more fitting sepulchre than a son's stomach.

In the matter of food, men seem to have agreed to differ: religion, politics, literature, and art afford them, each in its way, opportunities in abundance for exhibiting that antagonism of sentiment and diversity of conviction which seem proper to the species, and the diet question is not one whit less prolific of

animated controversies. The ancient Egyptians were gross feeders, as far as meat was concerned—beef, and goose, and raw mutton formed their flesh-fare. Although not what a deceased gastronomic baronet used to call sheep-biters, they were inordinate consumers of vegetables, with the exception of onions, which they held in superstitious horror; and even in a later age, when Omar entered Alexandria, he found no less than four thousand persons in that city alone exclusively employed in retailing vegetables. Cato, also, is said to have been a vegetarian in his tastes. We are told he doted upon cabbage, a succulent plant held in general esteem, which Galen unhesitatingly denounces as the cause of evil dreams, and the means whereby black vapours are made to ascend into the brain. Pythagoras forbids beans to his disciples, and these as well as pease fall under Galen's condemnation; but Pythagoras's prohibition is understood by Plutarch in a mystical sense: beans in his days played the part of the modern ballot-ball, and as magistrates were then elected by ballot, all that was intended by the injunction was a warning against meddling in politics, or engaging in the strife of political contests. Whatever may be thought of the dietetic qualities of the cabbage, there is one species the prophylactic virtues of which are indisputable, unless we rashly dispute the authority of that erudite work, *Natural and Artificial Conclusions*, by Thomas Hill, which, of course, the candid reader is not disposed to do. In this work, we read of 'the virtues of a rare cole that is to be found but one hour in the day and one day in the year. Divers authors,' we are told, 'affirm concerning the verity and virtue of this cole—namely, that it is only to be found upon Midsummer Eve (being the eve of Saint John the Baptist), just at noon, under every root of plantain and of mugwort, the effects whereof are wonderful; for whosoever weareth or beareth the same about with them, shall be freed from the plague, fever, ague, and sundry other diseases. And one author especially writheth, and constantly averreth, that he never knew any that used to carry of this marvellous cole about them who ever were (to his own knowledge) sick of the plague or (indeed) complained of any other maladie.' We are apprised by the same author that 'a man drinking the juice of mugwort and carrying the herb pedillion and crowfoot about him shall never weary in a journey.'* And we can scarcely marvel at this fact, when we learn that the familiar garlic, which enters so largely into Spanish cookery, in former times was always considered to possess the power of depriving the loadstone of its magnetic qualities. Andrew Ross, 'a great philosopher,' whom to 'have read all over' was the pride and boast of 'Sir Hudibras,' complains he had himself met with no garlic sufficiently potent for the purpose, but very rationally infers that of old it existed in greater strength.

As to flesh-diet, our northern ancestors appear to have held pork favourable to the development of a warlike spirit, for the heroes whom Odin entertained in Valhalla are represented as spending their mornings in the agreeable task of cutting each other to pieces with their swords, and, at night, passing their time in devouring huge junks of sodded boars' flesh—in other words, boiled pork—and washing down their food with mighty draughts of ale and mead. The Romans were great pork-eaters, and to this savoury dish both Varro and Juvenal, let alone Horace, have paid the highest compliments. Its popularity has not diminished since their times, which renders it not a little surprising that the animal to whom we are indebted for its excellence should have been held in such universal disesteem. Indeed, the first instance chronicled of a pope changing his name on his

* An old medical writer of repute in the middle ages states that a horseman who should hold a twig of *Agnus castus* in his hand would never be thrown.

accession to the pontificate is that of Sergius II., who had no better or other reason for doing so than that his patronymic was *Bocco di Porco*, or pig's countenance, as our modern *charcutiers* would have it. Pork, in the opinion of Galen, is the most nutritious of all meats, but he forbids it for the sick, as also beef; whilst mutton is a thing he proscribes, even for the healthy and robust. In this last particular he differs from other medical *savans*, some of whom limit their censure to fried, and some to roast mutton, whilst boiled is generally approved of. Salvianus inveighs against cold meat of every sort and kind, and by many writers hares' flesh and venison are oddly enough decried as un nutritive and indigestible—a character which was also considered to belong to milk. We less wonder at Galen for denouncing the flesh of the ostrich as sapless and tending to produce dyspepsia, although Heliogabalus was so fond of the bird as not only to compel the Jews to eat it in spite of their law, but himself to cause the capture of some hundreds, for the sole purpose of feeding on their brains. The quail, a delicate bird, much in request at modern Italian tables, was never eaten by the Romans; the belief being, as Pliny says, that they were unwholesome, first, because they were subject to epilepsy, and next, because it was their habit to feed on the grains of hellbore, which rendered their flesh poisonous. The turtle-dove was considered altogether a bird of another feather, for whoever should eat of its heart and brain, it was thought, however fierce his natural disposition, would find 'revenge and all ferocious thoughts' at once disappear, and his whole nature become gentle, placable, and imbued with 'columbine innocence.'

Our Scottish friends will not be dispensed to learn that, in times of yore, *broth* was held in high regard, and especially one description—unknown, we fancy, north of the Tweed, the more's the pity—which former ages recognised as *gold broth*. On this subject very learnedly discourses the reverend physician, Dr Primrose. In his mind, the custom of putting gold into the broth of the sick, which was common in the case of consumptive patients, was not harmful—it was simply unprofitable. The doctor could no doubt have prescribed a better use for the precious metal. He, however, candidly admits that on this matter, as on others, doctors differ—many considering gold a useful therapeutic agent in cases of heart-disease, palpitation, syncope, leprosy, epilepsy, and other disorders; and he quotes Avicenna, who contends that this metal is an effectual antidote for all poisons, and that, moreover, if a lump of it be inserted in the mouth of a newly born child, the infant, live it ever so long, need never fear the devil. Gold filings, also, the Arabian philosopher asserted was a specific against melancholy—a doctrine in favour of which much may certainly be said even by those who are not prepared to go the length of Paracelsus, whose opinion it is, that gold is a cardinal remedy for every imaginable evil under the sun.

A good deal might here be said respecting the notions the ancients entertained as to ichthyophagy, but for the present, at least, we must forbear.

DRILL UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

My name is Huddlestone, and I have just become a full private in a crack Volunteer corps. It matters little why I have been so long in screwing up my courage to what—as I wear a bayonet—may with propriety be termed the sticking-point. I might give half-a-dozen excellent reasons why, like Blucher at Waterloo, I have come into action so late in the day. The Huddlestones as everybody knows, are descended from a direct line from Athelstane the Unready, and a few drops of the sluggish blood of my illustrious ancestor may still ooze through my veins. Perhaps an exclusive devotion to business prevented my worshipping

at the shrine of Mars. Perhaps—most potent reason of all—my wife wouldn't let me. Wives have been known before now to nip in the bud the martial aspirations of their husbands. Patriotism, in their opinion, is like charity, and begins at home. Bachelors—these ladies have been heard to assert—may catch their deaths of cold out skirmishing, or break their necks as light horsemen, if they choose, but a married man has no business to risk his precious life by getting his feet wet at drill, or learning to trot without stirrups. His only cavalry exploit should be to go out riding with his wife, and his infantry duties should be entirely confined to his own nursery.

Whatever may have been the obstacle which in my case prevented a setting out on the road to fame, that obstacle has now been happily surmounted. My military enthusiasm, after gently simmering for many months, has at length fairly boiled over, and I now serve my country in the South West Middlesex, or Piccadilly Regiment of Rifle Volunteers. This evening, for the first time, I went where glory waited me in Snaffe's well-known riding-school, the part of Glory being taken on this occasion by Corporal Tartar of the Colclream Guards. I have just returned from sitting at the feet, as it were, of that military Gamaliel. With the impressions of my first appearance in any riding-school fresh on my mind, I sit down to record my recollections. I do so, as novelists say, with feelings of mingled emotion. The glow of the patriot still animates my bosom, but the ardour of the novice has been considerably damped. In a brand-new uniform, and brimful of martial ardour, which led me to refuse with disdain my wife's offer of an umbrella, I set off in a shower to be initiated into the mysteries of my new profession. Of military matters in general I enjoyed a profound ignorance. I knew as little of the actual process by which a plough-boy became a drilled soldier, as I know how raw silk is converted into a velvet dress. I had wondered at the mechanical precision of the military machines in operation at reviews, but the details of their manufacture were as unknown to me as the secrets of freemasonry. I confess to having had an undefined notion, that the principal part of a soldier's duty was to wear a smart uniform, and to keep his head up. I have quite altered that opinion. The change in my views has been effected by the personal inconvenience and fatigue I have endured for the last two hours. I may here state in general terms that I am not so young as I was, and that my figure corresponds with my age. Now that I know the ordeal that a soldier has to undergo, I consider him a martyr in his country's cause. I am quite prepared to be a martyr myself—to attempt impossible feats, and to stand in ridiculous attitudes for the good of my country—but I should wish my country to know what I have gone through in her service. To a man who, for nearly forty years, has been accustomed to use both legs in maintaining his equilibrium, it is a severe trial, physically and mentally, to balance himself in public on one leg, and wave the other about with the deliberate action of a ballet-dancer. He naturally wishes that a report of his achievement should appear in print, and that the nation should give him credit for such a meritorious exhibition of muscular patriotism. Martyrs of modern growth are not usually modest plants that are content to blush unseen, and waste their sweetness on the desert air; and it is as a martyr of the sunflower type that I proceed to narrate the particulars of my debut.

My sufferings commenced at the entrance of the building, in which the young military ideas of Piccadilly are taught eventually how to shoot. With the unnecessary zeal of a new broom, I arrived half an hour too soon. The door of Snaffe's establishment, which opens into a back-street, was locked. I need not say that, standing as I did in the full glare of an enormous gas-lamp, and opposite to a gorgeous

gin-palace, I immediately became the 'cynosure of neighbouring eyes.' In a populous neighbourhood, I have remarked that a considerable portion of the inhabitants spend the greater part of their time in staring. The indefatigable patience displayed in the pursuit of this favourite occupation would insure its professors in any other walk of life a handsome independence. Whatever the object of their notice may be, it seems to be a necessity of their existence to surround it if possible, and with their mouths wide open and their hands in their pockets, to gaze unblinkingly. To provide gratuitous amusement for this class, horses fall down in the streets, cabs are smashed, balloons ascend, and chimneys are set on fire. These are stock attractions that may be enjoyed when nothing else presents itself, but a stout gentleman, dressed as a volunteer, and kicking his heels on the door-step of a well-known establishment, was a novelty, and, as such, drew a large concourse of spectators. I was a decided hit, and found myself the centre of a gaping crowd, who stared at me as long and curiously as if I had been the latest eccentric importation from Australia on my way to the Zoological Gardens. Luckily, nothing in my regiments justified derisive comment. The good sense and good taste of the Piccadillies had led them, in choosing a dress, to prefer usefulness and economy to display and extravagance. No shako like an inverted flower-pot, and rendered more ridiculous by a cock's feather, formed a mark for the finger of scorn to point at; no helmet and plume; no lace, embroidery, or foppery of any sort invited popular criticism. A drab tunic, with red facings, drab pantaloons, drab foraging-cap, and brown leather belts, formed my quiet and inexpensive uniform. I had not even the objectionable red stripe down my trousers, to justify an ironical assumption on the part of the populace that I was a footman out of place. But who can escape the pungent satire of the street-boy? He stings as smartly and inevitably as a mosquito in the tropics. The very quietness of my costume was seized upon to hold me up to public ridicule.

'I say, Bill,' cried a little imp in corduroys, pointing to my modest drab suit and red collar; 'he's a Quaker with his throat cut.'

Of course, I affected to treat the ribaldry of a mob with sublime indifference; but though I stood my ground unflinchingly against juvenile sarcasm, I was utterly routed by juvenile compassion. When the laughter about the murdered Quaker had partially subsided, a small boy, about a yard high, approving, I suppose, of the Volunteer movement, observed in reproachful accents to his grinning companions: 'Leave him alone, can't you—how would you like it yourselves?' This was too much—pity from a street-boy was the last straw that broke the back of my endurance. I beat an ignominious retreat, and endeavoured to regain my presence of mind by a brisk walk.

When I returned, I found the door of the riding-school open, and with considerable trepidation I entered. It was an enormous building, lighted by gas, and admirably adapted for its double purpose of training beginners in the way they should go on horseback and on foot. Of this I am quite satisfied. No rapid act of horsemanship performed, perhaps involuntarily, in that arena by day, could surpass in eccentricity some of the very slow pedestrian movements voluntarily executed at night. About a hundred Piccadillies had assembled, and were standing in groups in different parts of the school. The adjutant, Captain Smart, was bustling about from one group to the other, and making a great clatter with his steel scabbard, with which he perpetually tripped himself up in a most energetic manner. He was an active, cheery little man, with an eye-glass fixed in the peak of his forage-cap, and a bass voice, so hoarse from constant bellowing, that it quite tickled

me. As I knew him a little, I went up and saluted, by knocking the back of my hand against my forehead, as I had seen soldiers salute on the stage.

'Ha, Mr Huddlestane,' he buzzed, 'glad to see you, sir—glad to see you. Ten minutes late, though. Better late than never—Eh? Seven sharp another time, mind. That's your squad in the corner; they're just going to begin. Corporal Tartar, this gentleman will join you.'

And now I saw a genuine military salute, performed by a professor. The individual addressed as Corporal Tartar was very long, very lean, very brown, and looked very much like a mahogany bedpost in regiments. When he heard his name mentioned, he drew himself up till he was perfectly rigid, jerked out his arm as if he were going to throw stone at the adjutant, struck his own nose horizontally with his hand, and put his thumb into his right eye. I need not say that the professional performance was as different from the theatrical one as the roar that follows forked lightning is from the metallic rumbling that constitutes stage thunder.

'Don't wait any longer,' bellowed Captain Smart. 'Set to work at once.'

'Very good, sir,' replied the professor, striking his nose again. 'Fall in, gents.'

This was addressed to about a dozen novices who were awaiting their fate in silence, and was said in the rather impatient tone of a father of a family who tells his children to 'jump in' when the cab is at the door to take them to a pantomime. Not seeing anything particular into which I could fall, I merely joined the others who, in their attempts to form a line, had got themselves into a zigzag. Corporal Tartar's first proceeding was to size us up. This he did by placing the short men in the centre, and the tall men, as he expressed it, on the flanks. He seemed to have some difficulty in fitting us to his satisfaction, and we certainly were an irregular lot. All heights were represented, from six feet two to five feet nothing; and all weights, from eight stone to sixteen. I found myself next to the sixteen 'stunner.' I have already hinted that I am not a slim man, but by the side of that mammoth in uniform, my waist seemed almost wasp-like. The professor's eye rested on the plethoric proportions of that very full private with undisguised pity. The next operation was numbering—I was Number Eight—Number Seven was a thin bilious-looking man with a blue nose. Number Nine was my fat neighbour, who was already breathing hard in anticipation of the two hours' severe work cut out for him. He evidently looked upon the whole affair as a capital joke. A perpetual smile played on his jolly red face, and the slightest incident was sufficient to send him into elephantine convulsions of silent laughter. Number Ten was of course totally eclipsed. I tried to get a glimpse of him by peeping round the enormous disk that hid him from my view, but Tartar promptly brought me back to my perpendicular by shouting: 'Look before you, Number Eight.' I did look before me, and found myself face to face with a brick-wall. And herein consisted one of my difficulties. The view afforded by unadorned masonry is decidedly monotonous; and yet if my eyes wandered for a moment from that exceedingly dreary prospect, Tartar was down upon me, so to speak, like a hawk, and not only were my wandering eyes continually getting me into trouble, but my other organs were, in a military sense, equally unruly. If I turned my head the hundredth part of an inch to hear, perhaps, what the adjutant was bawling from the other end of the riding-school, Tartar cried: 'Head steady, Number Eight.' Did I murmur a remark, *sotto voce*, to my neighbour, Tartar had the ears of a hare, and shouted: 'No talking, Number Eight.' If, in a moment of forgetfulness, I afforded digital relief to a temporary irritation on the bridge of my nose, the eagle eyes of Corporal Tartar detected the motion, and

his stentorian voice thundered out: 'Hands down, Number Eight.' In fact, Number Eight discovered, before he had been ten minutes at drill, that to be a soldier he must learn to become a cipher; and that till he was destitute of feeling, as well as devoid of curiosity, and could only see, hear, and move at the will of his instructor, he would be continually catching a Tartar, or rather a Tartar would be continually catching him.

The professor next explained to us the true position of a soldier. This I imagined to consist in standing as if a poker had formed the *piece de résistance* at my last meal, and in doing my best to stare the brick-wall out of countenance. Of course, I was wrong. A great many more essentials constitute the orthodox military attitude. Corporal Tartar, whose peculiar pronunciation I shall not attempt to reproduce, thus enumerated them with distracting precision: 'Shoulders square, heels close, knees braced, toes out, feet at an angle of sixty degrees, arms straight, elbows close, palms of the hands to the front, thumbs close, little-finger touching the seam of the trousers, body inclined forward, hips back, head up, eyes looking straight to the front, and the weight of the body on the flat of the foot.' How was a trembling novice to comply with the conditions of this bewildering formula, which not only settled the precise angle which should be formed by the junction of his heels, but the exact point where his little-finger should come in contact with his pantaloons? Tartar, too, who was evidently an enthusiast in his profession, would not bate a jot of his instructions, and poked and pulled us about till we had carried them out to the letter. 'Don't stand bolt upright,' he would say, 'lean forward, you won't fall down if you're in the proper position.' And when, in attempting to follow his suggestions, I did topple forward, he shouted triumphantly: 'That's not the position of a soldier, Number Eight.' He was very disagreeable, too, about our stomachs. 'Draw them stomachs in,' he said, giving me a slight punch in the region named; 'I don't want to see no stomachs.' This was said in an injured tone, as if he thought we had no business with such things about us, and might have left them behind if we had been actuated by a proper military spirit. Tartar himself certainly appeared to have discarded all gastric encumbrance, for his anatomy was that of a pair of tongs. The blue-nosed man also, who was as lean as a herring, found no difficulty in putting his ganglionic apparatus completely out of sight. But poor Number Nine, in his endeavour to render less conspicuous the part of his person so objectionable to the fastidious Tartar, doubled himself up till he had the appearance of a man suffering acute internal agony. Nothing, however, could abate his zeal and good-humour. He laughed perpetually, and I believe he would have tried to stand on his head if he had been told it was the right thing to do. When Corporal Tartar had arranged us to his satisfaction, walking backwards occasionally with his head on one side, as artists do before a picture, to notice the effect, and had dressed us into as good a line as our personal peculiarities would allow, he proceeded to instruct us in the more active duties of the military profession.

The first duty of a soldier, according to the Tartarian code, is to 'stand at ease.' To obtain this perpendicular comfort, it is necessary to 'carry forward the left foot six inches, toes to the left front, weight of the body on the right leg, left knee bent, bring the hands smartly together in front of the body, and slip the right hand over the back of the left.' The principal object of the manoeuvre appeared to consist in twelve pair of hands coming together with a loud clap at exactly the same moment of time. Our first attempt was, I confess, an egregious failure. There were, at least, seven different reports instead of one. It was like file-firing, Tartar said, whereas it should have been a volley. 'That's not the way

to stand at ease,' he growled in a disgusted tone; and he was perfectly right, for I never felt more uneasy in my life. 'Bring them 'ands together like one, and let me *hear 'em*—don't be afraid of 'urting yourselves. Now, then, spring up smartly at the word Attention, and cut away them 'ands with life. 'SHUN! What are you about, Number Eight?' I had not 'sprung up'—that was what Number Eight was about. How was I to know that the monosyllabic sound of 'shun' was the military abbreviation of 'attention?' I mistook it for a sneeze, especially as Tartar accompanied it with a jerk of the body and a hideous grimace. However, I was ready next time, and sprung up with such alacrity, that if I had not tumbled against my stout comrade, I should have lost my balance. 'Easy, Number Eight,' said the professor this time—'don't *over* do it. Now, then, try that stand-at-ease again, and all together, mind.'

When we had arrived at something like precision, and our hands were tingling with incessant concussion, we went through an elaborate series of gymnastic performances, called the Extension Motions. The purpose of these eccentric evolutions, Corporal Tartar informed us, was to open our chests, and give us a military carriage; but the loss of personal dignity involved in their execution was so great, that I confess I should have preferred to keep my chest shut, and to have dispensed with a carriage. Such acrobatic manoeuvres are more suitable for the Bounding Brothers of the Pyrenees, in their salmon-coloured tights and spangles, than for a respectable father of a family, whose waistcoats undergo perennial expansion at the hands of his tailor. However, I manfully went through the performance, stimulated by the example of my panting neighbour, Number Nine, to whom the physical exertion of such feats must have been a serious inconvenience. In the first practice, after we had executed several curious telegraphic motions with extended arms, we were told to touch our feet with the tips of our fingers without bending our knees. This ridiculous exploit, though perfectly easy to Number Seven—who, I believe, could have touched his toes with his elbows, or even with his eyebrows, if necessary—was a complete impossibility to me and Number Nine. By severe effort, which broke my braces, and brought on a sensation of incipient apoplexy, I reached to within a foot of my Balmorals; but the utmost that my fat friend could effect was to put his hands on his knees, and shake his great sides till his face was perfectly *mauve* with suppressed laughter. He looked like an enormous frog, and, indeed, our whole appearance must have been, as reporters say, highly suggestive—a row of gentlemen in very short tunics, in a standing semi-inverted position, must have formed an impressive tableau, that can be better imagined than described.

In the second practice we were made to clap our hands in front of our noses at the word 'One,' and force them violently behind our backs at the word 'Two.' 'Continue the motion!' bellowed Tartar, and we swung our arms wildly like so many direction-posts gone mad, till our shoulder-blades cracked like detonating balls, and the buttons of our tunics flew about in showers. This was the chest-opening business, and most effectually it answered its purpose. When it was over, my chest not only felt wide open, but was so strained and hampered, that I feared it would never be of any use to me again.

In the third, and, happily, the last practice, we clenched our fists, and whirled them insanely round our heads, as an excited drover attempts to turn a refractory herd of oxen. If a foreigner had been present, the singular spectacle of twelve gentlemen voluntarily converting themselves into animated windmills for the good of their country, would have given him an exalted idea of British patriotism. Blood, even, was shed in our enthusiasm, for Number Six, losing his balance in the excitement of the

moment, brought his knuckles into violent contact with Number Seven's nose. This little casualty brought the Extension Motions to a close, and the result of such severe calisthenic exercises may be imagined. For my part, I gasped with exertion ; my hair was dishevelled, my dress was damaged, my whole personal economy was deranged, and a general sensation pervaded my body that I was thoroughly out of joint. On comparing notes with my neighbours, I observed that my blue-nosed friend was not altogether unruffled ; indeed, his wounded feature was bleeding freely, and had changed its cerulean hue for an angry purple. The author of the misfortune regarded his handiwork in rueful perplexity. Number Nine was thoroughly disorganized as to his dress, and revelled in a state of jovial liquefaction. The rest of the squad were breathless and subdued. Corporal Tartar surveyed us with grim satisfaction.

When we had recovered our equanimity, and our wounded man could dispense with his pocket-handkerchief, the professor put us through our 'facings.' This process, though tedious, was an exercise of memory rather than muscle. It was terribly puzzling to remember the exact amount of revolution necessary for the 'right face' or the 'left half-face,' or the 'right-about three-quarters face,' and *vice-versa*. As Tartar facetiously remarked, when we got the word 'right-about face,' we always went to the wrong about. Instead of all facing in one direction, two gentlemen found themselves *às-à-vis*, two others were *dos-à-dos*, and all looked to different points of the compass, like weather-cocks on a gusty day. While we were thus learning how, as children say, to 'make faces,' I also learned a curious anatomical fact that is worthy of record. Few people are aware that they have a ball in each of their large toes. 'At the word "Right-about face,"' said Corporal Tartar, 'place the ball of the right toe against the left heel.' At the word 'Left-about face,' place the right heel against the ball of the left toe. And not only are our toes thus spherically furnished, but our feet are similarly supplied. 'At the word "Right-about three-quarters face," bring the ball of the right foot—not the ball of the toe, mind,' said Tartar, knowingly—'bring the ball of the right foot to the left heel.' In fact, according to the professor, every one carries a couple of foot-balls about with him. This is, I think, an interesting piece of information, that should be included by Mr Timbs in his next edition of *Things not generally Known*.

But the *ne plus ultra* of military singularity, and the *pons asinorum* of military education, is decidedly the goose-step. The object of this extraordinary performance is, we were instructed, 'to teach the soldier the free movement of his legs, preserving at the same time perfect squareness of shoulders, and the utmost steadiness of body.' With this view the novice is made to stand for an indefinite period on one leg ; a constrained position, which naturally depresses his corresponding shoulder, and produces a motion of his body like a ship in a gale of wind. The surprising manner in which that Dutch-built, and heavy-laden vessel, Number Nine, pitched and rolled and heaved when he attempted this manœuvre, the *very* 'free movement' of his great fat leg as he kicked it about in the air, the wild way in which he swayed his arms like a boy on a slide, and finally, the helpless manner in which he tottered, foundered, and came heavily down on two legs, formed a sight at which even the stern Tartar relaxed. The great secret of the goose-step, I discovered, was to keep the knee perfectly rigid. 'Brace them knees' was the burden of the professor's advice, as we successively failed to maintain the anserine attitude for more than a few seconds at a time. 'All you have to do, is to brace them knees firm.' Unfortunately, we each had a flexible joint at the very part where perfect rigidity was required. In fact, the only people who, in this respect, can hope to

make complete geese of themselves, are men with wooden legs. But though we made only a bungling attempt to acquire the ease and steadiness of our ornithological model, we *looked* the character to perfection. Anything more silly than our appearance, as we stood in a row with our feet tucked up behind us, it is impossible to imagine. But even geese cannot stand on one leg for ever. When we were finally allowed to resume our natural position, the Rubicon of drill was passed. Our other exploits were achieved in the posture, and with the action common to ordinary bipeds. We marched, we wheeled, we changed our feet, and performed a variety of ingenious and bewildering evolutions. Our last attempt was to march in single-file. I had to walk between my two neighbours, with my eyes fixed upon the back of Number Seven's head. In this position I was like the ham of a sandwich, and got dreadfully squeezed. The difficulty of file-marching consists in keeping the step. It is not important that you should keep it yourself, but if the man behind you is so awkward as to lose it, the result is exquisitely painful. Number Nine lacerated my ankles with his gigantic boots till the tears stood in my eyes, and I, in my turn, I fear, barked the heels of my blue-nosed friend unmercifully. This arduous and aggravating evolution brought the evening's entertainment to a close. The performance had been to me so new and strange, that I hurried home to chronicle my sensations. Here they are. The virgin experiences of a budding hero, with the bloom still on them. To-morrow, I dare say, their novelty will begin to wear off, and in a month I shall think no more of drill than I do of my dinner. By that time, I have no doubt, I shall make faces as well as the great Tartar himself, and shall even be able to copy nature to perfection in that unique pedestrian exercise, the goose-step.

FRANKINCENSE AND COFFEE MOUNTAINS.

THE finest productions of nature are frequently found in parts of the world which, in an artistic point of view, are remarkably uninteresting; but in the cases of coffee and frankincense, beauty of situation is united to the excellence of the commodities. Coffee, as our readers are doubtless aware, is entirely a modern luxury, which Solomon and the Queen of Sheba would have been too happy to sip together in their famous interview at Jerusalem. But frankincense was among the earliest discoveries of mankind, and no sooner had the properties of the gum been noticed, than it was appropriated to the service of religion. At first sight, the practice may appear to have been a mere wasteful expenditure; but when we carefully consider the temperature of most eastern countries, and the disagreeable odours which are invariably emitted from crowds shut up together in a close building, especially in southern latitudes, we shall understand the reason which led to the burning of incense. In the Levantine churches, it would be extremely disagreeable, especially in summer, to remain a quarter of an hour, were the atmosphere not impregnated by the pungent odour of incense, which overpowers the effluvia exhaling from the heated bodies of people not celebrated for wearing clean linen; and the absence of this perfume renders Protestant churches in Syria and Egypt less attractive than those of the Catholics, though persons who notice the effect are seldom aware of the cause.

Travellers proceeding towards Europe from India and the islands of the Eastern Ocean, rarely sail sufficiently near the coast of Oman and Hadramaut to observe its characteristics; but when they prepare

to enter the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, and have already passed Cape Guardafui, it is practicable with glasses to discern distinctly the features of the frankincense mountains of Africa. The cape presents a desolate and forbidding aspect, beaten incessantly by winds, and entirely stripped of vegetation. As, however, you ascend from the sea, the slopes of the mountains are observed to be covered with stunted trees, thick in the trunk, and throwing forth their numerous branches in the direction of the prevailing winds. The whole region is inhabited by the Somali Arabs, whose corkscrew curls and dusky complexions suggest a large admixture of negro blood. Like the Ababde of the Upper Nile, their heads, when the hair is worn, bear a strong resemblance to bee-hives; but they occasionally shave off their curls, and plaster their crania and foreheads with lime, which gives them a ludicrous appearance.

The mountains of Oman and Hadramaut, celebrated from remote antiquity for their medicinal and odorous productions, were said by the early travellers to have their summits covered in winter with snow, but modern observers have not confirmed this account. Still, the elevation of the ridges which run along the southern edge of the Arabian peninsula, and protect it from the ocean-gales, is very considerable; they collect the moisture of the clouds, which, after saturating the high lands, trickles into the hollows, and forms rills and brooks, that flowing down to the plain, occasionally form cascades, or spread into broad sheets of water, which impart a highly picturesque aspect to the country. Strangely enough, Hadramaut has been visited by comparatively few modern travellers, though its shores are passed every day by steamers going to and from India by way of the Red Sea. In old times, it formed the grand entrepôt between the East and West; and its merchants, distinguished for their opulence and enterprise, augmented the fame and power of Arabia; covered the land with noble cities, castles, palaces, and gardens; constructed commodious harbours; drew strangers from all parts of the world to their marts and emporiums; and carried Oriental civilisation to the highest pitch it has ever perhaps reached. Here, most of the fruits known to tropical regions flourished luxuriantly—the peach, the almond, the pomegranate, the apricot, the banana, the date, purple and golden, and grapes of the largest size and richest flavour. In addition to these, the bazaars and markets of the Sabaeans displayed all the productions of India and the Farther Asia—spikenard, ammonum, diamonds, rubies, pearls, opal and gold mingled with ostrich feathers; superb horses and camels from the Nejd; and frankincense, myrrh, and aloes from their own mountains, and the dependent island of Socotra.

The soil of Hadramaut is still as sweet and prolific as ever, the people are as active, and in disposition well qualified for the transaction of business. But commerce, like a capricious river, has altered its course, the seats of civilisation have changed, the mighty states of the Old World have crumbled to nothing, and nations, whose very names were unknown in those days, have monopolised the trade of the world, subverted the celebrated empires of Asia, and swept away their wealth, to be accumulated in new cities built on distant shores. In consequence of these and other vicissitudes, the power of Southern Arabia has dwindled into insignificance, its ancient cities have become ruins, its richest fields have in many instances been converted into deserts, and its most famous productions

ranked as inferior to those of many neighbouring lands. When the civilisation of the Old World was at its height, and Egypt, as it is now again becoming, the great highway of Oriental commerce, ships were constantly setting sail from Suez for the ports of Yemen, Hadramaut, and Oman, where they took in lading of every kind of merchandise known to those times. The people of the country professed that ancient religion which appears to have flourished from the banks of the Nile to those of the Ganges, but is now only kept alive by a handful of British subjects, who build excellent ships, and worship fire in the city of Bombay. These sectaries in the ages to which we refer had erected in Hadramaut a vast temple to the sun, which, guarded perpetually by bodies of armed men, served likewise as a mighty emporium for the more precious commodities of the country. These—aloes, frankincense, and myrrh—having by the cultivators been conveyed to the fane, were piled up in large heaps on the floor, with a tablet declaring their weight and value at the top. The merchants from Syria, Greece, and Egypt, on arriving in the ports of Hadramaut, quitted their ships, and repaired to the temple. No bargaining took place. They inspected the goods, consulted the tablet, and, if satisfied with the price, never called in question the honesty of the fire-worshippers, but took the medicine and the perfume, paid their money, and departed. The transaction was effected under the surveillance of the temple-wardens, who were permitted to appropriate one-tenth of the money to their own use.

Stimulated by curiosity, several Greeks would appear to have visited the country as travellers, and to have proceeded eastwards as far as the confines of Oman, surveying the frankincense mountains, and drawing up that report, which, coloured by their imagination, assumed by degrees something like the air of fable. Snow, as we have said, capped the summits of the ridge, the higher acclivities were clothed with forest, while the lower slopes, completely sheltered from the hot winds of the desert, gave birth to the myrrh and frankincense trees, which were pruned and cultivated with the utmost care. The turf throughout the plantations appears to have been removed, and was probably, as now, used as fuel. Then the ground was carefully swept, and delicate mats, woven of palm-leaves, were everywhere spread beneath the trees. Incisions having been made in the upper part of the trunk and larger branches, the odorous gum oozed forth, and trickling into drops, fell like a perfumed shower upon the mats. Some reckless proprietors allowed the frankincense to drop upon the earth, or scraped it with a knife from the trees, by which means it became mingled with particles of dust, or chips of bark, which deteriorated its value. The method of collecting at present in use seems to be far more rough and ready than that which prevailed of old, and the article in consequence is held in considerably less esteem. Still, large quantities are annually shipped from the ports of Hadramaut, to be burned, on the one hand, in the temples of India, and on the other, in the churches of Catholic Christendom.

What Hadramaut was in antiquity, Yemen has become in modern times, by a production far more generally diffused and more loudly celebrated. This is the coffee which receives commonly the name of Mocha, because it is chiefly shipped at that Red Sea port, though the neighbouring cities of Loheia and Hodeida share in the trade. Whoever desires to visit the mountains where this modern nectar is produced, must disembark on the margin of the burning Tehama, and on donkey or dromedary direct his course inward across the arid waste. Here and there as he journeys along, with the scorching sun and a cloudless sky above him, a clump of mimosas or date-palms indicates the spot where he may quench his

thirst, at one of those deep and inexhaustible wells which everywhere stud the fiery desert. Presently, patience brings him in sight of *Beit-el-Fakih*, or the *House of the Learned*, the name given to the small city which forms the capital of the coffee district. The mountains as you approach rise behind each other in ridges or terraces till they attain a great height; and if your visit be made in spring, the whole looks like a sea of white blossoms, waving gently in the breeze, and throwing forth every moment the most exquisite and delicate perfume. The scene is rendered more charmingly picturesque by lofty forest trees which traverse the plantations in vast avenues, affording shade to the coffee shrubs, whose delicate foliage would otherwise be withered and blighted by the too ardent sun. Far and near, the whole landscape is dotted with towns, villages, and hamlets, belonging to the proprietors and labourers engaged in the cultivation of the coffee. Winding roads and paths, immersed for the most part in dense shade, enable you to ascend the steep acclivities with comparatively little fatigue, till, having reached the summit, you are fanned by delicious cool breezes from the high lands of the interior. Here prospects are enjoyed, to be surpassed for beauty neither in Europe or Asia. All around, beneath your feet, a succession of terraces of mingled bloom and verdure conducts your eye down to the level *Tehama*, whose glowing surface extends to the cerulean edge of the Red Sea, backed in the distance by the lofty mountains of Africa.

As no cultivation can be carried on in the tropics without an abundance of water, numerous contrivances are resorted to for making the most of what is found in the *Beit-el-Fakih* mountains: tanks are constructed on various platforms, whence, by small winding channels, the moisture is conducted in every direction, and let loose upon the terraces, to find its way to the roots of the coffee-trees. The agriculturists of Yemen—though no one has hitherto given them credit for so much conscientiousness and prudence—would appear to be guided both by wisdom and integrity in their dealings with the earth's productions. In spite of the sweetness of the soil, which imparts to the coffee-berries the flavour which renders them unrivalled, a more profuse application of water to the trees would augment their size at the expense of their quality. This is known to the cultivators of coffee in the West Indies, in Bourbon, Java, and Ceylon, who are restrained by no such considerations of morality, but, with an eye to profit, give the berries all the development which the united force of soil and water can produce, and hence in part, at least, the striking inferiority of all other kinds of coffee to that of *Beit-el-Fakih*. We say in part, because there can be no doubt that there is a virtue in the Arabian soil, which, like that of Attica, displays itself in all the fruits of the earth. A date from Yemen or the *Hejaz*, and still more from the *Nejed*, is far more delicious than one grown in Egypt, or Morocco, or *Fez*, though in the European markets, where more regard is had to size than flavour, the *Barbary* dates are preferred. Extremely slight causes will increase or destroy the delicacy of coffee. In nearly all parts of Europe, it has long ceased to be that delicious beverage which it once was, through the numerous, adulterations effected by trading dishonesty. But some deterioration is occasioned by causes against which it is impossible to guard. Tea, it is well known, in spite of all the precautions taken by merchants, is much injured by passing over the sea, for saline particles penetrate through every covering, set at naught every defence, and to some extent spoil the Chinese luxury. Accordingly, to drink tea at *St Petersburg*, whether the article is brought overland, is almost worth a journey to the banks of the *Neva*. So, again, as to coffee: even the short passage from

Jiddah to *Suez* is sufficient to spoil the berries of *Beit-el-Fakih*, to enjoy which in perfection those only must be used which are brought overland by the Pilgrim Caravan. To drink coffee is then to taste the most fragrant and refreshing liquid in the world. *Hermitage*, *Champagne*, nay, even imperial *Tokay* is nothing to it. When, after a long ride in the desert, you reach towards evening a clump of palms, kindle a fire, roast and pound your coffee to an almost impalpable powder in a mortar, and then boil it for a few minutes, you may be said, while you sip it, to have reached the summit of all mere material enjoyments. Here you recline, watching the sun descend behind the sand-hills, while your camels, folded on all-fours, form a circle around you; and your attendants, at a little distance, sit smoking in groups. Softly the air of the desert fans your cheek, and rustles the palm-leaves over your head, while the discovery of the sheik of *Beit-el-Fakih* soothes your whole nervous system, and begets delicious visions in your brain.

In the mountains of Yemen, where coffee first came into use, innumerable myths are in circulation respecting the means by which its qualities were discovered. Some say that the goats, when they had browsed on the leaves of the young trees, were observed to become more frisky and lively; but this is absurd, because it is not the leaves but the berries that enliven those who taste them. According to another legend, a pious and learned sheik, sitting up all night for the purpose of pursuing his studies and his prayers, happened to possess in his garden a coffee-tree, the berries of which, having been shrivelled and dried by the sun, emitted a pleasant and refreshing odour. The idea entered his mind that the taste might be still more reviving than the smell, so he plucked and ate of them, and found himself delivered from sleep, as well as inwardly comforted in a very wonderful manner. He then be思tought himself, as the berries rather augmented than allayed his thirst, that it might be advantageous to steep them in water, first cold, then tepid, at last boiling hot, by which his discovery was brought to perfection, and he became one of the great unknown benefactors of mankind. The dervishes in some eastern caravansaries, who give up their nights to devotion, are for that reason extremely useful to travellers, since, at whatever hour you reach the grand resting-place, they are always ready, and, to do them justice, seldom unwilling, to assist you in preparing coffee. From the great fountain in the quadrangle, they bring you water, and, to soothe your impatience while waiting, fill and light your pipe of *gebeli*, then putting the amber to your lips, proceed calmly with their culinary operations. In some cases, the place of the dervishes is supplied by the *ghawazie*, who are more rapid, though not less careful, in their movements. Once, after having ridden fifty miles in the sun, we arrived dead beat at a caravansary which had been taken possession of by one single *ghawazie*. The building was immense, lofty as a fortress, with crenellated battlements and turrets at the corners. It contained many hundred rooms, all built of hewn stone, with galleries, verandahs, and magnificent staircases. Yet, as we have said, a lone young woman was its sole occupant. She sat beside the fountain before a lamp, not reading, which would probably have been beyond her power, but meditating on no one knows what. As soon as she perceived us, she came forward, took charge of our baggage, locked the gates of the building, which had till then been left open, and while we lay half-dead on the camel-furniture, got ready the coffee in an extraordinary short space of time, and then brought it, and held it to our lips. It was overland coffee, sweetened with sugar-candy, and frothing with rich *buffalo-milk*. Never did the fragrant steam appear so reviving; it put our weariness to flight like magic, so that we

were soon enabled to ascend the topmost terrace of the building, where, leaning on the parapet, we enjoyed the delicious night-breeze, and beheld in the far distance the watch-fires of the Bedouins.

It may possibly be owing to some perversion of taste, but we certainly prefer drinking coffee in a night-halt in the desert to sipping it in the most brilliant drawing-room. Even the terraced roofs of Beit-el-Fakih, spread with soft mats, and surrounded with odoriferous blossoms, are in our estimation less delightful than the quiet sand-hills, far away from human habitations, where, pipe in hand, you recline drowsily beneath the stars, listening to the rustling sound made by the loose particles of sand as they are swept along by the breeze. All men have a taste, more or less developed, for luxury. To many, it will doubtless appear ridiculous that, in the lonely waste, a man should take pleasure in articles which would seem to be fabricated for mere show; yet we plead guilty to the weakness of liking to drink our coffee out of delicate porcelain, *finjans* (cups) of purple and gold placed on silver *zeefs* of exquisite filigree, which flash brightly as the fitful flames of the cooking-fire shed their light upon them. Nothing can be more elegant than this Oriental apparatus. The *finjan*, shaped like half an egg, and without a handle, is placed while you drink in the *zeef* or stand, like an acorn in its cup.

The ladies of Egypt, to whom the joys of intoxication are not permitted, do all they can to make up for their absence, and find nothing come so near the mark as the exhilaration produced by Arabian coffee. Under its influence, they laugh, talk, sing, and tell stories, with as much vivacity as a Parisian belle under the inspiration of champagne. After all, however, much of the agreeable effect must be attributed to the climate. No one enveloped by the moist atmosphere which prevails on the banks of the Thames, the Seine, the Tiber, or the Nile, drink what he may, can conceive the effect produced by the same beverage in the pure, light, buoyant air of the desert, which in itself is almost intoxicating. This is the compensation which nature bestows on the wandering tribes for the want of beer and brandy. To them a few dates seem more delicious than turtle-soup to an alderman, while a *finjan* of Yemen coffee undoubtedly outdoes a glass of the richest Burgundy. As we have already said, there is something extremely peculiar in the soil of all Arabia, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the coffee and frankincense mountains and the valley of Tayef. All the vegetation of those regions is more or less perfumed. The common thorns exude a scented gum; the *jasmin*, everywhere fragrant, is doubly so in Arabia; while the rose surpasses in sweetness even those of the Fayoum and Serinaghur. It is not surprising, therefore, that the coffee of the Yemen mountains, through the general excellence of the soil, should be superior to that of other countries. Besides, as the tea of Japan is supposed to owe much of its fine flavour to the care and cleanliness practised in its cultivation and picking, so the coffee of Arabia may be much indebted to the skill and prudence of the husbandmen. The berries having been gathered with the greatest care, have equal attention bestowed on their drying, packing, and mode of transport; though when arrived at the ports of the Red Sea they pass from under the eye of the Yemani, and are abandoned to the tender mercies of Hindus, Egyptians, Turks, Syrians, and Greeks. Occasionally, these merchants proceed to Beit-el-Fakih, in order to purchase the best coffee on the spot, for the produce of the trees is divided into three sorts—first, the picked berries, from which all that are bruised, or ill shaped, or too small, are separated; second, those which are left as gathered; third, the small and bruised, which, of course, are obtained at a much lower price. Reflection on this fact will explain why coffee really from Mocha is often of very inferior quality, and disappoints

the buyer, who has formed perhaps an exalted idea of the fine produce of Yemen. Even the worst, however, of these berries are superior, in our opinion, to the finest Java, which is owing entirely to the qualities of the Arabian soil.

A T A P L O U G H I N G - M A T C H .

'HALF-PAST three o'clock, sir. The maister has gone to Kirkton for the gig, and ye're to be at the east toll-bar at half-past four.'

Under the impression that I had that moment fallen asleep, I opened one eye sufficiently wide to admit the consciousness that I was in my uncle's house very far north—that it was a bitter February morning—and that I was under an obligation to get up and drive for fifteen miles against the razory breezes of the hills, to attend the annual ploughing-match of the Quaich-chron Agricultural Society.

'All right, Betsy,' I answered, drawing the blankets over my head, and proceeding to readjust the disturbed scenery of my dream, in the desperate, and, alas! vainly desperate hope that Betsy, having fulfilled the letter of her instructions, would not trouble herself about results: I could get up at nine o'clock, greatly annoyed that I had been allowed to 'sleep in.' But Betsy has other views for me; she won't let me do it; so, finally, having rubbed an astonishing quantity of stones out of my eyes, I reluctantly get up.

A luminously warm parlour, and the cheerful melody of a shining tea-kettle, do not, by force of contrast, make the plunge into a bath of fierce northern air less terrible; but Fear is as arrant a deceiver as Hope, and I survive the feat. The daylight is faintly quickening through the dark, and the pomp of the stars diminishing. As I wend along the straggling street of the village, a dubious light here and there, and the more decided whir of flying shuttles—those perturbed spirits—indicate that thus early some industrious websters are on the tredilles. How cold it is! The fizz and sputter of the street-pump quivers through all my manifold wrappings. This is the toll, and here comes the gig. We have a difficulty with the bar-keeper. It may look like a hyperbole to say that his snoring shakes the frail tenement round him, but it is the fact; and it is not easy to improvise a din sufficient to rouse a person who accustoms himself to sleep in the continual noise of such a respiration. At last he issues out in small clothes, with an eruption of linen before and behind, and barely according a civil reply to an inquiry concerning his health, takes his fee, and opens the gates.

In the gig beside my uncle is Nicoll the blacksmith; though he is also bound for the ploughing-match; for though it is not strictly in his district, his handiwork is to figure there. My uncle—called Braxie, from the name of his former farm—was in his day a noted hand at these competitions. 'Before I was your age, I took the first prize at Invererdech,' is his standing term of reproach to unproductive young folks. He has the Royal Agricultural Society of Scotland's medals, with his name on one side, and a silver man driving a silver team through a silver soil on the other. Far and wide, he is known as an unmatched first-prize man. Though now retired from agricultural life, he is often employed as a judge; but his delight is to officiate as 'second' to some rising competitor; and he wins many prizes yet in this indirect way. It is in this capacity he is to act to-day. Nicoll is attached to him by a long-standing regard, which borders on sentimental affection. Braxie's last field of fame was the great Roselane match, open to all the world, and Nicoll was the maker of his plough. They were celebrated together as champions of the world in the popular song beginning, 'Come all ye lads aroun' me now.' That circumstance is a tie of affinity between them

which death only can break. Braxie rather toys with his friend's feelings; but Nicoll is reverential, and thinks it complimentary to be hoaxed, merely retaliating, 'You're a hang vagabon', Braxie.

The space of seat between the two being an understood rather than an apparent thing, my affirmative reply to Nicoll's kind inquiries if I am comfortable, is civility and good-nature stretched to the brink of dishonesty. Our road lies through the lower ridges of the Grampians, over moors and mosses many. O. I have ample leisure to be romantic if I like, for I am reckoned nobody in the technical discussion which springs up regarding the working-apparatus and natural products of the district. Ultimately, the smith apologises for the exclusive nature of the conversation, by telling me that he and Braxie have been 'acquainted for nigh thirty years.' Then it seemed to strike him that a new acquaintance might, after all, have some claim on his attention, and he hazards an observation on the city. 'It's an awfu' place for population, they tell me.' This is undeniable, but not pregnant, and chiefly upon that very account. Since, however, I believe his effort to condescend to the level of my understanding sincere, though abortive, I can't do less than return the compliment.

'Have you formed an opinion on ploughing-matches as to their social influence, Mr Nicoll ?'

The person addressed hastily inhaled the contents of his snuff-pen, generally loaded, and hovering in a state of suspense somewhere in the vicinity of his nostrils; and having refilled it from his box, exclaimed—'Good!' and then took snuff again, and this time with such a long and strong pull, that I feared the pen might disappear in the violence of the draught.

'My aunt appears to think they do more harm than good,' I suggested, with the view of eliciting a more detailed opinion. The smith reached an arm, of the usual preternatural longitude of smiths' arms, across me, and dug a thumb into Braxie's side. This was the nearest approach to a sly hint the good soul was capable of. 'She says,' I continued, 'that for many weeks before, and full as many weeks after them, those concerned, and some not necessarily concerned, make them the pretext for a deal of boozing and neglect of other things. Emulation among the men degenerates into envy and ill-nature. Those who are successful consider themselves bound to melt the prizes in whisky. Generally, only one man and his friends believe that the judges have done their duty honestly; and,' I added significantly, 'she has complaints of a more personal nature.'

'Your aunty,' put in Braxie, 'speaks as one of the foolish women. As bad could be said of all competitions whatsoever. Tak' ye my word for it, there's no danger of farm-servants havin' too much money to spend, or too much time to spend it in. And one thing I know, and that's not two—your aunty was as proud as her neighbours when somebody brought home his trophies.'

Nicoll earnestly confirmed all this as being the lord's truth, and handed Braxie the snuff-box in testimony of his entire approval.

'Particulars aside,' I said, assuming a philosophical air; 'rightly considered, the triumphs of peace have their dark side as well as the triumphs of war. One man's honour is still another man's shame. The most desolate day of my life was when I saw a high prize in a public school awarded to some one else. Think now, Smith, you champion ploughmaker of the world, can you coolly return thanks for the honour as a providential dispensation, when you know how keenly it mortifies so many brothers of the craft ?'

'I ken nothing about that,' replied Nicoll, undisguisedly pleased: 'every man for himself, and the devil for us a'.'

'That is true, but it is a melancholy truth,' I persisted dolefully. 'I suppose a time may come, how-

ever, when superiority can be acknowledged without bitterness. We know there are angels and archangels diverse in power, but each as complete in happiness as the other.'

Nicoll looks as if he very much wished Braxie to come to his relief by interposing an observation at this juncture; but Braxie has evidently as little inclination as the other to trust himself upon the hierarchies, and whistles the *Brass o' Mar* in the direction of the sunrise, which is now throwing great splashes of red up the east. So we subside into silent admiration of its cloudy purples, gradually quickening into livelier pink and vermillion, which in turn dissolve in their own intensity, or kindle upwards towards the zenith. There, we may say, all the colours of the day are huddled as on a pallet, to be wrought up and distributed by pencils of sunlight. Below us in the valleys, volumes of mist of woolly whiteness, and apparently of woolly consistence, trail close to the ground, wasting gradually at the skirts. The heather is around us, and I may almost say above us, but not a touch of blossom enlivens its dreary aspect. Holding eastward, in due time we drive into the court-yard of Cocklea Farm, the scene of the coming struggle. I make no hypocritical display of good-will or amity to the shaggy creatures that come snarling about our calves; for if ever my extremities are to be dog-bitten, now is the time when, thanks to the benumbing drive, they can meet their destiny with the least degree of sensation, painful or otherwise.

A vague impression that we have been nearing the north pole for the last hour, has led me to expect at the best a low wrack of thatched *sheilins*, with a fire in the middle of the floor, and the smoke contriving its exit by its own unassisted ingenuity. But here is a handsome pile of fresh masonry in modern fashion—a dwelling-house with bow-windows and a portico which will look very pretty when its trellis-work of scarlet-runners thrills into little sprigs of blossom. In the stables, which would do honour to a model farm, we find Braxie's principal for the day with a knife-blade between his teeth, busily arranging his horse's tail in holiday gear, and otherwise attending to the animal's toilet. He is a young Hercules of a farmer, known to his friends as the Cork. That designation, synonymous with governor or overseer, is frequently given to the eldest sons of farmers thereaway. I am introduced to the notice of the Cork, who instantly advises me never to put my hand to the plough as a main fact of existence. He assures me he is never free of cares and pains from morning to night; but looking at his fresh and full-blown face, I flatly disbelieve him. He learns that I am from the city, and appears surprised that I don't know 'our Will,' also of the city.

The state of the ground is an important consideration, it seems; and we sally out to examine that. It is quite a spacious plain for a locality of such irregularities and inequalities, and is parcelled out and ticketed as if about to be sold in slices. The lea is pronounced bad for the most part—trampled, short, *mirly*. 'Ye could shak' it through a pepper-box,' says one hyperbolical person in a faded *tartan coat*: *a priori*, I should have fancied he was utterly unaware of the existence of the luxury, pepper.

People from the neighbouring hamlet and farms, with horses, carts, and ploughs arrive thickly, and the ample margins of the field are speedily strewn with straw-litter and baggage. 'Has Birnam come, ken ye?' the faded *tartan coat* inquires of me. Till that moment, Birnam had only been known to me as a place which once was made to send a wood to Dunsinane, to the great dismay of Macbeth. But this other Birnam is to be a more practical object in my eyes soon. People inquire after him with bated breath. He is to be the great gun of the day, a man of many medals. 'We've seen the day when Birnam would be but sma' drink,' Nicoll says to my uncle fondly.

The old boy seems really touched, and makes no reply. Perhaps his fancy, too, is away back in the spring mornings of the long ago, when the arrival of his own cortège on the field was a sensation. Nicoll again silently stuffs the snuff-box into his hand, in token of sympathy, retaining a heaped penful for his own refreshment.

Thirty-five ploughs have arrived. The men having picked a lot with as much discrimination as each can exercise with his finger and thumb in the depths of a lucky-bag, congregate round a cart occupied by the clerk, who reads the rules, 'by order of the committee.' No place too far north for that institution. An outside lot has fallen to us. Braxie unhesitatingly ignoring the rule that no assistance can be given to the competitors, scampers, nimbly as a boy, up the ridge with an armful of red-tipped poles which look like a bundle of Brobdingnagian matches; these he grounds in a line at intervals. All over the field, 'seconds' are running to and fro on the same errand, while Cocklea, who is umpire and master of the ceremonies, in vain talks of making examples. What can a government do when the whole nation is traitor? Protest! Meanwhile the work goes on; and the lea is bristling with pikes like a pin-cushion; the ploughs are drawn up in order of starting, and bang goes a gunshot. When you look again, the green has been scored with five-and-thirty black ruts.

A pretty sight, truly! A faint haze of mist just dense enough to curtain the scene off from infinity—the sun shining with more brightness than warmth—a gay crowd in rural finery—these make the accessories of the picture. But the horses! Away with your foppish exquisites of the chase, your airy nothings of the turf, your rash-headed sparks of the war. For genuine examples of contemplative dignity, joined to substantial force, you must look here at these giant-limbed mighty-boned brutes moving slow in pairs. Do you mean to tell me there is no conscious pride in that sweeping arch of neck? that curl of nostril blowing clouds of fume like an engine-funnel? The shaggy fetlock, a gentle stroke of which would settle all our earthly affairs, is laid down as lightly and delicately as the foot of a fay, not to bruise the mould. Art, too, has been called to the assistance of their natural charms this morning. Tail and mane are streaming with red, blue, and yellow ribbons, and a rosette of the same stars the forehead. Little scintillations of light flicker among the colours, for the harness is studded with sparkling bits of brass, while many of the hems are naked steel; the chains, buckles, and other gearing are as bright as much scrubbing with stable-dung will make them. The men themselves, mostly stripped to the shirt and trousers, are worthy of the horses, and that is saying a good deal for them. They work in a great variety of attitudes. One walks upright in the furrow, exerting no visible effort, but holding the stilt as if it were a mere matter of ceremony. Another, with one foot in the furrow, and another on the lea, bobs up and down in a manner painful for me to witness, whatever it be to him. Another holds the plough at arms' length, his feet both on the lea, and stretched far behind, as if he were making experiments aenent the laws of gravitation. The variety of facial contortion is indescribable; so is the murmuring confusion of directions. It is a marvel to me that each horse, with its back towards its instructor, can so accurately pick out of the Babel exactly what pertains to himself. When things are going normally smooth, these run low and dispassioned: 'Veynd—Hi—Haud aff—Come 'ere—Wo—Hip—Gee.' But a storm follows an aberration; and you will hear Bob, or Baldy, objurgated on occasion with some force. One pleads soothingly: 'Now, lassie, now!' Another, with an indignant—'Jess, WOMAN!' comes smartly down on Jess's hip with the hard rein. If I were Jess, in such a case, I would consider that I had got reasonable provocation to stammer out of the furrow, and make a

gutter; but Jess simply whisks her tail, first as a telegraphic signal of receipt, and then again, to realise more distinctly the inexplicable sensation caused by the unwonted assault. The first-rate hands seldom speak to their horses at all.

Well, what sort of *feerie* has the Cork made? 'A pair of pretty ruts, if he ploughs up to them,' my uncle had said at an early stage. He *has* ploughed up to them—that is, he *has* laid the two first heavy furrows against and over the two first light ruts. That is the *feerie* (I spell it as well as I can phonographically). Great care is bestowed on these first furrows; sometimes they are lifted and patted from end to end with the hand. 'There's no a better job on the field, and I'm mista'en if you are not *far in*, Cork,' is Nicoll's judgment, which, besides being premature, is unfair from the fact, that he has never stirred from the Cork's head-ridge. Then he inquires officially at the Cork how he is off for land. 'The Cork thinks he could take another nick.' While I am rapidly repeating the mensuration table, in order if possible to find how much a nick of land is, the smith shifts the cleek of the swingle-tree tackling a notch to the right on the muzzle of the plough, and I am to understand that the desired conveyance of land has been effected; that is, the Cork has now greater facilities for taking a broader furrow. Braxie unweariedly trots from one end of the field to the other, detecting every variation from the line, directing the Cork in a whisper where to 'grip in half an inch,' or sending him back to lift up a portion of fallen furrow, or kick an irregularity into order. The principal does what he is bid, with the air of a man convinced of the vanity of fame, and smokes a deal more than his second thinks consistent with the importance of the issues. On a hint to be like his work, and break that pipe, he puts it out; but shortly stops the team half-way round, and Braxie seeing him deliberately evoke fire by dint of steel and flint, tells me 'he is a pike-thank *veeshun*,' the English of which, I believe, 'is a pick-thank vision.' It is to be observed, as significant of a transitional epoch in these parts, that the old men all snuff, and the young men smoke; and there is the usual amount of disturbance consequent on the conflict of the Old and New.

Here, as elsewhere, every competitor has his clique of supporters. As elsewhere, here, when a man's domestic influences fail him, he rallies on his party relations. A rivulet splits the district into two great factions. The North and the South, keenly antagonistic, each through the mouth of its partisans, spurs on its men. Then there are the rival masters, for the majority of the competitors are servants. Then there are the rival smiths, who do not speak to each other, far less to Nicoll, who is an interloper: they naturally view the aspect of affairs through a differently coloured medium. In a sphere of so many prejudices, none lack the assurance of merit. I rather calculate that twenty, perhaps, are being simultaneously assured they are *far in*, and may reckon on the first, second, or third prize, according to the modesty of the speaker. Wives, with incipient ploughmen in their arms, are sneaking about the hedges with little baskets of provisions; and a brood of the same species in various stages of development are in view of Paterfamilias and his work.

Here, too, the genius of youth expresses itself in imitation. In a retired corner, I come on three brothers—smart juveniles in velveteen jackets—who have smoothed out a sandy surface, and with great gravity, are conducting their miniature affair. The youngest, a white-haired, blue-eyed Saxon, is slowly scoring off very neat corduroy in sand with one of the前述 red-tipped poles; pausing occasionally, he draws his sleeve across his brow, to make believe that this is a tough job indeed. The second, rather a fantastic, not very clean-nosed genius, is making rough work with a paling stob, and storming

vehemently at some visionary horses which appear to be refractory. The eldest enacts the judge, his hands folded behind his back, and his head set critically to one side. He, it appears, is too taciturn or slow to appreciate; for the Saxon, inadvertently sloping his plough over his shoulder, looks expectantly at him for some time, and then, with an air of disappointment breaks out: 'Man, Tom, you should be sayin: "What clever little chappie is this?"' and again subsides into his ideal, to give Tom another opportunity. You, my young friends, are the future Birnams, and Braxies, and Corks? When your elders up there are singing to their teams in the Elysian fields, doubtless ye shall reign here in their stead, and sleep too, in your turn, with your fathers, under the shadow of the Grampians.

At one o'clock, a brown loaf and quart bottle of beer are planted at the end of each lot; shortly after, a disturbing element of unknown origin operates on the crowd, the eddying groups of which gradually set in one current towards the farm. I see a man moving about, whispering right and left, and one after another yields to the spell, whatever it is. He picks me up at the root of a hedge. 'Will you step up and get a bite o' dinner, sir?' and I, too, submissively drift into the current. Cocklea is operating as host on a magnificent round of beef in a handsome dining-room. Before leaving, Nicoll signs me into the window-recess, for no other purpose, as he says, than 'to have a quiet snuff.' He looks rather more worshipful without his cap, for his crown is bald and shining. Seeing me touch that feature lightly with a glance, he comes over it affectionately with his hand, and tells me, 'There's no a hair between the smith and heaven.' Though he endeavours to give it an impromptu air, I warrant he has been repeating that irreverent joke any time these twenty years. Taking familiar hold of my button-hole: 'The Cork is *far in*,' he says in a semi-official tone, and I express a hope that the cork being so far in would not fall into the bottle. One says a man has fallen into the bottle (be it known), when one wishes to avoid the rudeness of saying a man is badly intoxicated. Nicoll, in good faith, assures me 'he will take good care of that,' and to my vexation, seems wholly unaware of the presence of a joke. It is evident to me that he himself is fast falling into the bottle, for he demands abruptly where I could find another man like Braxie.

By order of the committee, the field must be blackened by four o'clock. Many lots are finished before then; for there are men who, modestly waiving all claim to merit, almost trot their horses for the sole purpose of coming in for the prize awarded to the first finished. It becomes evident, from the frequent peregrinations of the judges between the lots of Birnam and the Cork, that the supreme honours lie between these two. They consequently absorb most of the spectators. Wonderful are the criticisms. A gray little man—a kirk-elder, I should think—with his thumb in his vest-pocket, deliberately enunciates the opinion, that 'the Cork has a very excellent bottom. Very good bottoming, this—don't you think, sir?' indicating the bottom of the furrow with his staff. 'Very good, indeed, sir; I warmly assent, without much sense of what has been accomplished. A straight line, regularity, firmness, and a sleek gloss are the main points. 'The finish,' that is, the style in which the trench which divides the ridges is dressed up, is only next in importance to the *feerin*. Braxie has been looking to this for some time, by incessantly applying his foot-rule; for, you see, it sometimes happens that one finds himself in the predicament of having at the last a slice of lea broad enough for three furrows at one end, and with only breadth for two at the other; or though uniform, it may be too narrow for division, and too broad to go all to one side. In either case, *the finish* is a failure,

and foresight guards against it by measurement and gradual pairings.

The clerk is once more in the cart then, surrounded by a crowd anxious to know how much justice is still left in the world. For my own part, I am conscious that this little event has been gradually thrusting its importance close and closer to my eyes, till it has overshadowed the universe. At this moment, it would be hard to convince me that something very terrible would not befall the British nation, if the first name announced by the official there is other than that of our friend the Cork. Whatever would have resulted from that eventuality, will never be known, for the clerk opens his lips, and the Cork's name slips out, followed hard by Birnam's. My first feeling is exultation of course; but it immediately sinks in another of generous sympathy with the veteran of many fields. As Napoleon went from Waterloo, as Macaulay from the Edinburgh hustings, so will Birnam go to a dreary home this night.

Of the dinner—of Nicoll's extraordinary conduct—of my uncle's speeches—of how the Cork did fall into the bottle at last—of our drive home—of how Nicoll was placed in the middle this time, as a precautionary measure—it is perhaps best to speak but generally.

THE ANGLER'S SONG.

WHERE the bulrush bows and bobs—

Bob, bob,

By the spongy osier-bed;

Where the rushes are brown-red;

Where the willows bend and weep;

Where the fan-carp snort and sleep;

Where the otters rob;

Patient waiting for the float—

For the float,

All vermillion, round, and swimming

Where the deepest tide is brimming;

Where the dragon-fly is skimming;

Where the water-lily's swimming

Round my flopping boat—

There I watch the bobbing float—

Bobbing float;

Where the swallow fawn is drinking;

Where the swallow sets me thinking;

Where the water's clear and blue;

So the gravel shineth through,

Round my shallow boat.

Where the rushes move and stir;

Where the pigeon's in the fir,

Where its brooding mother's song

Murmurs low the whole day long,

All above the branching oaks,

'Neath which the water-lily soaks—

I bob, bob, bob—

Bob, bob, non,

Like Job, not caring for jokes.

Where my red float down the stream

Poises o'er the ponderous beam;

Where the perches' thorny fin

Pricks the sullen otter's skin,

And the bars upon their back

Shew like zebras, gold and black;

Where above the bosoming dell

Stands the buck, to snort and 'bell'—

I bob, bob, bob—

Bob, bob, non,

Passing my time so happy and well.